

# Director's Remarks, April 2011

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## **Performance**

The overall circulation statistics for the branches continue to rise. However, Downtown Library circulation continues to fall. We continue to receive requests to extend the hours and days at the branches. Staff members at the branches are presently stretched to the limit, and I see no possibility for increased hours without increased staff. The monitoring of three floors and the extended hours at the Downtown Library makes it impossible to transfer staff to the branches without compromising service downtown.

## **Automation**

Staff is still working out the kinks in the new Polaris Automation system. Robert Drake, Manager of the Downtown Library, and Carol Green, Head of the Northgate Library, have taken the initiative to learn the behind the scenes set-up of the system. They have become the go-to people for questions about Polaris. Everyone has made excellent progress learning the new system, but I want the Board to know that Robert and Carol have taken leadership roles and deserve recognition.

## **Downtown Renovation and Repairs**

The Board is invited to tour the Children's Department to see their new look. New carpet and a new drop ceiling have been installed, and fresh paint has been added to the walls. There are still some ClubLib funds left for new blinds and other amenities. The Bi-Lo Interactive Learning Station is on hold until after the Summer Reading Program Finale in July. The Children's staff is now preparing for the Summer Reading Program and is planning materials for 5,000 children.

I spoke with Rodney Swann with Chattanooga Elevator. He informed me that some of the repair equipment has been trickling in. The "controllers" for both elevators will be shipped the last week in April, and new "fixtures" have been ordered. The "controllers" are the new digital master panels that will be housed in the elevator control room in the basement, and the "fixtures" are the button and light panels on the inside and outside the elevators. Onsite work will begin in May with the left-hand elevator being upgraded first. That elevator will then be inspected and approved for operation. The right-hand elevator will then be shut down for its upgrade.

## **Friends of the Library**

The Friends had a successful book sale at the Eastgate Town Center. Many volunteers participated and over \$21,000 was taken in.

## **Renewal of Online Databases**

There are a number of online databases that expire at the end of June. The total cost for renewal of all the expiring databases is over \$226,000. The total amount budgeted for the year is \$110,000. The biggest increase is with the EBSCO databases. I am negotiating a lower EBSCO price by eliminating some of the lesser-used databases. I have received input from staff on which databases they use the most and what they think we can eliminate without adversely affecting service. In the past, leftover book funds were used to make up the difference in the database costs. This year, book funds cannot make up all of this difference. I will present my recommendations at the next board meeting so that renewed databases will have no interruption in service.

## **Request for Formal Board Vote for Updated Computers**

I am requesting a Board vote to purchase new staff computers. The majority of the computers to be replaced are approximately 8 years old. The new Polaris system is designed to run on the Windows 7 operating system not Windows XP that we now use. One group of 18 computers (cost \$13,600) will be purchased through a matching Technology Grant distributed through the Tennessee State Library and Archives. The remaining 50 computers, which do not have the same specifications as the Technology Grant computers, will cost \$30,672. The total cost of \$37,472 (including the library's part of the matching grant) would come from the Free Public Library Fund.

In the past, public computers have been upgraded approximately every 3 years through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Because public computers are much newer than staff computers, I would like to wait for their upgrade. If the Gates Foundation continues to provide computers for the Downtown Library, South Chattanooga and Eastgate, we will then have the opportunity to purchase computers for Northgate and Ooltewah/Collegedale at a deeply discounted price.

Although the Board voted last fall to use the Free Public Library Funds for the automation system and technology upgrades, the City Finance Department requires a separate Board vote for individual purchase orders over \$10,000. I would like the Board vote to purchase new staff computers for \$37,472 using the Free Public Library Fund. The balance of \$6,800 would come from the Technology Grant.

Submitted by Eva M. Johnston, Interim Director